

J.C. Watts, Jr.  
Chairman  
4th District, Oklahoma

*House Meets at 10:00 a.m. for Legislative Business*

*Anticipated Floor Action:*

**H.R. 707—Disaster Mitigation and Cost Reduction Act**  
**H.Con.Res. 40—Honoring Morris K. Udall**



**H.R. 707—Disaster Mitigation and Cost Reduction Act**

**Floor Situation:** The House will consider H.R. 707 as its first order of business today. Yesterday, the Rules Committee granted an open rule that provides one hour of general debate, equally divided between the chairman and ranking minority member of the Transportation Committee. The rule accords priority in recognition to members who have their amendments pre-printed in the *Congressional Record* and waives the requirement that the committee report be available three days prior to floor consideration. The chairman of the Committee of the Whole may postpone votes and reduce the voting time on a postponed vote to five minutes, so long as it follows a regular 15-minute vote. Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit, with or without instructions.

**Summary:** H.R. 707 amends the 1988 Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act; *P.L. 100-707*) to authorize grants to help communities prepare for and mitigate natural disasters, as well as streamline and modify existing disaster relief programs. Specifically, the measure authorizes \$25 million for FY 1999 and \$80 million for FY 2000 for these grants. Under the bill, disaster victims may be eligible for up to \$25,000 in federal assistance per disaster event, and may receive up to \$5,000 for repairs not covered by insurance. The measure also authorizes grants for services not currently covered during or after a disaster, such as medical and dental care and funeral costs, and allows federal aid to help states and local governments repair public facilities as well as property owned by nonprofit organizations.

The bill includes a number of measures to make current disaster programs more efficient and reduce the costs of natural disasters. This includes streamlining the management cost reimbursement requirements and combining the housing and individual and family assistance programs. The Transportation Committee reported similar legislation (H.R. 3869; *H.Rept. 105-682*) by voice vote

in the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress; however, the House did not consider the measure before adjournment. A CBO cost estimate was unavailable at press time. The bill was introduced by Mrs. Fowler *et al.*; the Transportation Committee reported the bill by voice vote on March 2, 1999.

**Views:** The Republican leadership supports passage of the bill. An official Clinton Administration viewpoint was unavailable at press time.

**Amendments:** At press time, the *Legislative Digest* was aware of the following amendment to H.R. 707:

**Mrs. Fowler** will offer an *en bloc* manager's amendment to make several changes to the bill. Specifically, the amendment:

- \* eliminates the mandate in the bill that requires, as a condition for receiving federal housing assistance after a disaster, applicants show that financial assistance is not available through the Small Business Administration or any other federal agency. The intent of this provision is to remove an undue burden on disaster victims;
- \* requires that—when a state or local government determines that the public welfare will not be best-served by repairing or restoring a public facility because of soil instability—the federal contribution toward repairing such a facility will remain at the 90 percent level. The bill currently reduces the federal government's share of “in-lieu” contributions for repairing damaged facilities from 90 percent to 75 percent. Some members are concerned about areas where mudslides make the prospect of rebuilding a facility unwise; and
- \* requires FEMA to permit public comment on any new or modified policies that may result in meaningful change in the amount of disaster assistance that a state or local government may receive. The amendment also prohibits the FEMA director from adopting any policy that retroactively reduces the amount of disaster assistance provided to state or local governments under the bill. **Staff Contact: Marcus Peacock, x5-5504**

**Additional Information:** See *Legislative Digest*, Vol. XXVIII, #5, Pt. II, March 3, 1999.



## H.Con.Res. 40—Honoring Morris K. Udall

**Floor Situation:** The House is scheduled to consider H.Con.Res. 40 after it completes consideration of H.R. 707. Mr. Kolbe is expected to ask unanimous consent that the resolution be debatable for one hour.

**Summary:** H.Con.Res. 40 expresses Congress' profound gratitude to the late Honorable Morris K. Udall and his family for the service he rendered to his country, and recognizes his commitment to bipartisanship and collegial interaction in the legislative process. Morris “Mo” Udall, who

represented the Second District of Arizona for 30 years in the House of Representatives, died on December 12, 1998, after a long bout with Parkinson's Disease. Mr. Udall was among the most effective and admired legislators of his generation. He was instrumental in reorganizing the U.S. Postal Service, restoring lands scarred by surface mining, protecting civil service employees, and fighting to safeguard the legacy and rights of Native Americans. The resolution was introduced by Mr. Kolbe *et al.* on March 3.



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